

**ANACONDA Aluminum Division**  
Columbia Falls Reduction Plant  
P.O. Box 10  
Columbia Falls, Montana 59912  
Telephone 406 892 3261



ANACONDA Industries

by mel ruder

Concern of the Flathead 30 years ago was what would happen after Hungry Horse Dam construction payrolls ceased.

Recalling thoughts of 25 and 30 years ago regarding the Flathead economy were James A. Cumming, Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce president in 1953; Joe Crosswhite, business manager of Operating Engineers Local 371 and president of Montana AFL-CIO 1957-69, and James E. Murphy, Kalispell chamber president early in the 1950s.

Cumming, Helena native, World War II infantry captain and Stanford graduate, started his Columbia Falls law practice in 1947. He referred to the "up and down economy in this area each year with heavy winter layoff." He emphasized: "there was need to get something in the valley to even things out by providing steady employment." The veteran attorney concluded: "Anaconda men and women are also good neighbors."

Crosswhite is a third generation Montanan. His grandfather's family came to Montana Territory in 1862 and his grandmother's in 1872 homesteading in the Deer Lodge Valley.. Crosswhite was in the Merchant Marine during World War II, coming to the Flathead in 1946 starting a dairy and continuing to work in road construction.

Crosswhite recalled: "Hungry Horse Project was finishing up with people being laid off. You couldn't ask for a better job connection with the dam being completed and plant construction starting. In September, 1952 Wixson Crowe men and equipment left the Hungry Horse Project and went to work clearing the plantsite. Men who had worked at Hungry Horse knew that there'd be construction jobs opening followed by year-around job opportunity in the plant."

Crosswhite concluded: "Relationship of Anaconda Aluminum Co. with organized labor has been good. We've also been fortunate in having plant management concerned about Montana, the Flathead and the community."

Three-term Flathead legislator, Murphy is a George Washington University law graduate, and World War II medic, who opened his Kalispell law practice in 1946. This Flathead civic leader was a member of the National Water Commission.

Murphy commented: "The Flathead Valley suffered a severe economic blow when the Somers Mill shut down and the entire mill and town were sold to a Seattle junk dealer in 1950."

The Kalispell civic leader continued: "Construction of Hungry Horse Dam kept the economy up, but this was a temporary respite. Upon its completion the force required to operate the dam would be small compared to the job loss suffered by closure of the Somers Mill."

Murphy then noted "hopes were high when Harvey Aluminum

Co. announced plans to build a reduction plant, but were dashed when the company couldn't obtain financing. There were rumors that the Anaconda Company might take over where Harvey had faded. These rumors gave renewed hope, especially since the Anaconda Company was known and had been contributing to the Montana economy for years.

Murphy concluded: "It was a happy day in the valley when the contracts were signed; happier still when construction began and fears of the early fifties were dispelled. The past 25 years have been good to the Valley economy. To this the Anaconda Company has been a major contributor, as it will be in the next 25."